

Artist's Statement

Richard Metz: *The Suits*

Men's suits are both a seductive and repellent material to me. The more I work with them, the more I appreciate the beauty of their lines, and the subtle elegance of their colors. Mostly though, I am working with the notion of the suits as a symbol of hierarchy and male privilege.

On one level, the characters that grace the backs of these suits are kinds of demons bent on leveling society and unleashing the repressed energy and humanity that the corporate world denies. On another level, these characters are corporate alter egos and the inner children of executives. As masquerade-like costumes, the characters on the backs of the suits reveal an inner nature of men, be it angry, child-like, confused, unmasculine, or depressed. They blend childhood dreams and the adult mutations that grew from them.

I want to suggest that which lies buried in the male stereotypes of our culture: the naked and sexual, the raw ferocious anger, the loneliness and alienation, and the emptiness which spawns endless greed. The images of the suits are based on men, both specifically and in general.

In simplified terms, the Sharkman refers to men who are cunning and hungry, without regard for those they hurt. Protestman overfills his life with the fire of angry rebellion. The Hindu god Ganesh contemplating his head (which his father cut off) is a meditation on the loss of self-identity. Big Ego Head is a study of men who regard themselves with an exaggerated sense of importance. Some characters are based on myths of different cultures, while others are created from my own observation and imagination. What they share in common is a fusion and distortion of animal and human forms.

Men's suits both reveal and conceal the adult male, with responsibilities and an insecure ego to defend. Bearing strange characters on their backs, these suits could be how I imagined them as a child: full of my father's presence and authority.

I have hung these works filled out with both space and a symbolic object. An unexpected center or addition to the piece hangs inside the suit. The backs are painted like executive biker jackets. The insides reveal something less protected.